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FACTS, REFLECTIONS,

AND

QUERIES,

SUBMITTED TO THE

CONSIDERATION

OF THE

ASSOCIATED FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE.

EDINBURGH.—M DCC XCII.

That have afforded
much pleasure to the friends
of good Government in Scotland

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TO THE

ASSOCIATED FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE.

GENTLEMEN,

PERMIT one, who, if he knows his own heart, wiſhes well to the intereſts of his country, to claim your attention for a few moments. I have obſerved with conſiderable ſurpriſe, in many late newſpapers, various *accounts* of your aſſociation in different places, and a multitude of *declarations*, publiſhed in your names.

Amid the fluctuations to which human affairs are liable, occaſions of danger or diſtreſs may ariſe, when every good citizen will eagerly ruſh forward to the ſervice of his country, without waiting for the call of thoſe to whom the immediate care of the public intereſts has been delegated. Unleſs, however, on ſuch extraordinary emergencies, it is ſurely better to leave the management of public affairs to the ordinary officers; nor interfere farther than ſhall be neceſſary to retain *them* in a due ſubjection to public opinion.

Theſe ideas have, incontrovertibly, ſo much of reaſon and common ſenſe in them, that I cannot ſuppoſe you willing to diſclaim or contradict them. I would gladly learn, then, by what conſiderations you have been induced to aſſociate, and to emit thoſe declarations which ſeem intended to perſuade your fellow-ſubjects to do as you have done and to act upon your views? Have you ſeriouſly eſtimated the advantages and diſadvantages of your civil and political condition? Is the nation in circumſtances of diſtreſs? Has any aſſault ſhattered the bulwarks, or ſapped the foundations of our conſtitution? Have remarkable imperfections been detected in that admired conſtitution, which had hitherto eſcaped unnoticed?—Or have any of our neighbours ſo highly improved their political condition, as to afford us reaſon for thinking, that we ſhall do well to follow their example?

I. I know not what is National Proſperity, if it be not now enjoyed through the whole Britiſh empire. In *numbers* we were never more powerful; nor was the increaſe of our *population* ever more rapid than at preſent. Our great cities are daily extended; new villages ſpring up in every favourable ſituation; and farm-houſes

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are multiplied over all ſuch parts of the country as are not unſuſceptible of cultivation. Thoſe who, after a ſeaſon's abſence in town, repair to the country, are aſtoniſhed to find how much more cultivated and populous an aſpect it has aſſumed within that ſhort interval: And one can hardly return to any of our towns, after ſpending a few months in the country, without perceiving the ſtreets to be more thronged than when he left it, and a number of new buildings to have ſprung up.

Nor are our numbers increaſed, without a proportionate increaſe in the *demand for their labour*, and in *means for their ſubſiſtence*. Our ancient ſtaple *manufactures* of *Linen* and *Woollen* cloths have been improved and extended. To theſe we have added the manufacture of *Cotton-ſtuffs*. Our own artiſans now furniſh almoſt all articles of accommodation which are required even by the moſt luxurious modes of life known among us. The prevalence of Britiſh faſhions in foreign countries proves how generally the other nations of Europe are indebted to our merchants, our artiſans, and our artiſts, for the conveniencies which they enjoy.——The flouriſhing ſtate of our manufactures has had an happy influence on the improvement of our *a-*

griculture.

griculture. Almoſt every field ſuſceptible of tillage has been manured and ploughed up; ſpecies of manure, and modes of cultivation have been adopted, by which the natural fertility of the ſoil has been, to an incredible degree, augmented: The marſh has been drained; the common incloſed; the barren heath has given place to rich and luxuriant crops.—Grounds apt only for *paſture* have been, in like manner, rendered amazingly more productive: Better breeds of ſheep and black cattle have been introduced; and with theſe, more ſkilful modes of managing live-ſtock of all kinds.——Our *foreign trade*, too, has kept pace with our domeſtic induſtry. The exportation of our own productions and manufactures is alone ſufficient to form a great trade; and with this is connected ſo conſiderable an importation, and a *carrying* trade, as to make the merchants of Britain the principal merchants in the world.

Happily, theſe advantages are not confined to the great and opulent, but extend to all claſſes in the community. The Noble, the man in office, the merchant, the proprietor of land, the manufacturer cannot enjoy their fortunes, or conduct their affairs, without the aid of the *Induſtrious*

Lower

Lower Orders. Thoſe who have read of the condition of the poor among the nations of antiquity; thoſe who have ſurveyed the circumſtances of depreſſion and wretchedneſs in which they ſubſiſt all over the continent of Europe; they who know to what miſerable ſervitude the *Emigrants by Indenture* have been reduced in America,—may, at firſt ſight, think the labouring claſſes of the Britiſh Nation, too fortunate in being ſo free, ſo independent, ſo ſecured from oppreſſion, and in enjoying ſo many of the comforts, nay even of the luxuries of life: But, our virtuous, induſtrious poor are the pride of our empire; nor is there an honeſt heart in any rank of life, within the Britiſh dominions but muſt exult at the ſight of the chearful, happy induſtry of our labourers and artiſans. How ſnug, how clean, how comfortable their houſes! How neat, how rich their ſunday's clothes! The humbleſt labourer can procure as good beef, mutton, and ale or porter as he who receives his annual thouſands.—It might be ſuppoſed that, in a country ſo populous, it ſhould be often difficult for the labouring poor to find employment or means of ſubſiſtence. Yet, ſo far is this from being the caſe, that the

farmers

farmers cannot, without extreme difficulty, procure ſervants to perform the work of their farms. Almoſt every manufacturer would gladly employ twice as many hands as he can at preſent obtain. Children have hardly learned to ſpeak and walk, when their little labours are eagerly hired. A mechanic of ordinary ſkill and dexterity in any common trade will earn, in Britain, what would, over the continent, be eſteemed a liberal income for a gentleman.—— It is indeed wonderful that, while the price of labour is ſo high through the Britiſh dominions, we ſhould, yet, be enabled to underſell our rivals in all foreign markets!——How eaſily acceſſible are wealth and honours to the very loweſt of us! By a very little frugality, the weaver may eaſily raiſe himſelf to be a manufacturer. And, how often do we ſee the merchant and the manufacturer accumulate princely fortunes, and attain to almoſt every honour, however high, that the ſovereignty of their country has to confer! It is eaſy for the poor man, too, who cannot himſelf attain the ſummit of his wiſhes, to give his ſons an education which may fit them for the moſt honourable employments in the ſtate. Let thoſe

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who have contemplated all the forms which the various diviſions of ſociety have ever aſſumed, or who have endeavoured to imagine to themſelves, modifications of ſocial life, happier and more perfect than any that we have yet ſeen;—Let thoſe men tell me, whether the lower orders ever have been, or can be rendered more independent, more reſpectable, more comfortable in all circumſtances of their condition, than they are at preſent, in the Britiſh empire? And if they can prove this to be either poſſible, or to have actually happened; then ſhall I no longer maintain the Britiſh conſtitution to be the moſt perfect model of national ſociety which the world has yet ſeen. The equality of nature is indeed incompatible with the advantages of ſocial life: But, it is ſurely next to the equality of nature, that even the pooreſt and meaneſt ſhould have the conveniencies of life fully within their power, and ſhould have a ſhort and eaſy career to opulence and honours, opened to them by the laws and the circumſtances of the ſociety to which they belong.

Amid theſe felicities of our condition, the *Energy* of our *National Character* has not yet been relaxed. In vigour of body and of mind, we

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are ſtill unequalled. Our ſoldiers are brave and well-diſciplined; our ſailors diſplay all the powers of endurance and of action that can diſtinguiſh heroes. Strong as we are in our inſular ſituation; our ſecurity is confirmed by the unrivalled ſuperiority of our naval force. Should a foreign enemy dare to attack us; we have legions ready to ruſh, at their country's call, from the plough, the anvil, and the loom, whoſe valour will eaſily check every invader, and enable us to give the law to Europe.

II. That *Conſtitution*, and that *Government* are ſurely good, which render a nation great and happy: Eſpecially if the national happineſs be not confined to one order, or to one corner in the ſtate, but be diffuſed through the whole, and be the portion of the peaſant and of the mechanic, no leſs than of the King; and if the national greatneſs be not the greatneſs merely of a prince and his miniſters, but of every private ſubject of the empire, in compariſon with the ſubjects of other governments. Such truly are the preſent greatneſs and happineſs of the Britiſh nation! And hardly need other proofs be produced to evince, that our conſtitution is actually as perfect as it was, an hundred

hundred years ſince, believed to be; and has rather been ſtrengthened and perfected, than injured by the lapſe of a century. The balance is ſtill preſerved in all its original juſtneſs. On no ſide of the fabric can a clear eye diſcern any thing like decay.

I may, with ready confidence, affirm, that the Britiſh conſtitution does not, at preſent verge, and has not, for a long while verged towards any undue influence in the Crown. The *direct* influence of the Sovereign is not equal to that of the other branches of the legiſlature. Even his *indirect* influence, whether legiſlative or executive, taken ſimply by itſelf, is rather weaker than ſtronger, than it is, by the fundamental laws of our conſtitution, underſtood to be. An amiable man, like our preſent Sovereign, will be honoured and eſteemed, while the adminiſtration he employs, are, in a reaſonable meaſure, able and virtuous. But, a wicked prince, and a weak adminiſtration would find themſelves more unhappily ſituated in Britain, under its preſent conſtitution, than any where elſe over the world.——The ſovereigns of France held an authority little leſs deſpotic than that of the tyrants in the Eaſt.

All laws were ſubject to the caprice of the prince.—Power ſo exorbitant, it was natural for humanity to abuſe. And, could the French nation have acted with prudence when an opportunity aroſe, enabling them to impoſe reſtraints on this authority, ſo uncontrouled and ſo liable to abuſe; they might now have been a free and happy nation, flouriſhing in the arts of peace. But, for us, our fathers ſtruggled. It is long ſince a Britiſh monarch poſſeſſed that unlimited power which ſeduces to tyranny.

Perhaps, our *Ariſtocracy*,—that claſs of ſubjects on whom the laws of our conſtitution confer peculiar privileges, as the rich and great,—are formidable? Far from it. The peculiar privileges of our peerage are very inconſiderable: They poſſeſs no diſproportionately large ſhare even of the land-property of the empire: They derive no very invidious diſtinction from their titles or enſigns of dignity: Not having, like the commons, the command of the national purſe, they are of very inferior power as a branch of the legiſlature. In their judicial capacity, they well merit that confidence with which the nation have long relied

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on them, as ſupreme arbiters of juſtice. Had we not ſome ſuch thing as permanent nobility among us, mere wealth would revel with too much of tyrannical inſolence. It is better for the poor, that we have the noble and the wealthy mutually to humble each other.—— Before the nobles of France, the inferior claſſes in the ſtate were held in contempt as the *canaille*, or depreſſed in all the miſeries of actual vaſſalage. They had reaſon to be provoked at that inſolence and oppreſſion under which they had ſo long groaned. Such, however, is not our condition. Our nobility are not terrible: As private men, we neither hate nor dread them: As a body in the ſtate, they poſſeſs no overgrown privileges; nor do they abuſe thoſe they poſſeſs: They ſtill occupy the ground aſſigned them by the fundamental laws of our conſtitution: Their political exiſtence has always been found of eſſential utility in the ſtate.

The *Houſe of Commons* may perhaps be ſaid to form an ariſtocracy, more formidable than the hereditary nobility. They do, indeed, in ſome degree. But this is that ariſtocracy which, whatever the form of the ſociety, muſt always ſubſiſt. It is formed by the union of wealth and abilities:

abilities: And, in every modification of civil life, whether in America, in France, or in Britain, property which furniſhes the ſupplies of Government, and abilities which lay out thoſe ſupplies to the beſt advantage, muſt ſtill rule the whole. This is, and has always been a permanent phenomenon in the policy of ſociety. To oppoſe its exiſtence would be the vaineſt taſk that man could undertake.—Do we deſire a more frequent recurrence of the elections of our parliamentary repreſentatives? By this, I fear, few good purpoſes could be ſerved. Were the duration of each parliament reduced to a very ſhort ſpace, the acts of our legiſlature would be too irregular and deſultory; parliament would ſtill be diſſolved, as its members became properly acquainted with the train of public buſineſs: Nor can I think, that an annual, a biennial, or even a triennial return of our preſent ſeptennial riots would be very beneficial to the morals or the induſtry of our country.—If any alteration in the mode of election has become neceſſary, in conſequence of the progreſs which civil life has made, and the changes it has undergone among us; yet, in our attempts to amend, let us beware of putting

ting forth too impatient and furious a hand: This mode never ſucceeds in any of our more ordinary concerns.

Complaints have been made, that the aukward ſyſtem of ariſtocracy eſtabliſhed in our *Royal burghs* is a diſgrace equally to the good ſenſe, and to the boaſted liberty of our country. Thoſe complaints have been, by much, too violent; for, the preſent adminiſtration of the government of moſt of our Free Burghs is not ſuch as to juſtify any loud clamours againſt them. The regulation of the police, the repreſſion of public licence and diſorder, the cheriſhing of uſeful public eſtabliſhments, and the exhibiting of an honourable example of decorous morals and manners,—are what burgh-magiſtrates appear, generally, to make, in a very decent degree, their care. Nor has it been evinced, even by the moſt invidious ſcrutiny, that more groſs abuſes of the public money take place in the management of burgh-funds, than in almoſt all other inſtances of Society revenue, or of company accounts. There is a certain pitch of perfection to which we may reaſonably expect human nature and human affairs to attain: But, above this, if we try to

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raiſe them, it is as if we ſhould labour to raiſe water in pipes above the level of its ſource. Of one thing I am perſuaded, that to give a very democratical form to the government of our Royal burghs—would be a change moſt pernicious to the wealth, the induſtry, the virtue of the whole community. If thoſe who require a reform of our burghs are ſincere friends to their country, to the burgh-intereſt in general, or to any particular burghs; if their object be not ſolely to embarraſs the national adminiſtration, or to teize the magiſtracy of ſome particular burgh; if they are themſelves ſtrangers to the ſpirit of faction, and have more good ſenſe and honeſt pride, than to degrade themſelves into tools in the hands of the factious: Let them unanimouſly countenance that bill for a *Burgh-Reform*, which has been lately brought into Parliament by a man whom we cannot deny to have proved himſelf a ſincere friend to beſt intereſts of his country. It promiſes the reform of flagrant abuſe, without turbulent confuſion: It will rectify every thing againſt which there exiſts any great cauſe of complaint: If amendments be neceſſary to fit it more perfectly for its

its purpoſe, theſe it can receive in the ſeveral ſtages of its progreſs through Parliament.

It has been alledged, that our preſent ſyſtem of *Laws*, and *Judicial Eſtabliſhments*, afford not a ſufficiently ſpeedy or impartial diſtribution of juſtice. But, pray, which is preferable,—Turkiſh, or Britiſh juſtice? In the infancy of ſociety, men are few, and their affairs little complicated. Diſtributive juſtice is then adminiſtered without the aid of written laws. As ſocial life is improved, the want of laws comes to be felt. Laws are enacted. Theſe cannot be perfect at their firſt inſtitution. As ſociety continues to advance in its progreſs, new relations are formed, and new neceſſities ariſe; the imperfections of former inſtitutions are ſeen; genius and induſtry diſplay themſelves in a vaſt variety of modifications; property is augmented; and the contentions to which property gives riſe, become, in a due proportion, more numerous. Hence is the ſyſtem of laws enlarged; precedents are eſtabliſhed; deciſions are multiplied; and form is added, to ſubſtantiate form. It is the advancement of civil life, and the improvement of our moral ideas which create that complex ſyſtem of juriſprudence of which, e-

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ven while benefited by it, we feel ourſelves tempted to complain. It is perhaps beneficently ordered by Providence, that the tedious delays, and the expence attending litigation ſhould impoſe ſome reſtraint upon the cunning and the contentious ſpirit of man.

Our *National Debt* is, indeed, great; and a vaſt *Revenue* is required to defray the *Expences* of our *Government*, and to pay the intereſt of their capital to the creditors of the nation. This revenue is, of neceſſity, raiſed by a heavy *Taxation*. But, are our taxes above our ability to pay? No. If they were, we ſhould be in wretched beggary, and our numbers would faſt diminiſh; inſtead of being rich, and happy, and growing in population as we are. In truth, the payment of taxes is an advantage or a diſadvantage to a people, according as thoſe taxes are impoſed, and levied, and laid out with more or leſs wiſdom and equity. Taxes may be ſo impoſed as to prompt to beneficial modes of induſtry, and to check thoſe which would be ultimately diſadvantageous. By the impoſition or the abolition of taxes, by the increaſe or diminution of the duties on this or that commodity, by the commutation of them from one commodity

modity to another, and by variations in the manner in which they are levied—are the Legiſlative and Executive Powers beſt enabled to encourage and to cheriſh induſtry and trade, to diffuſe proſperity over the whole ſtate, to rouſe ſloth, to check licentiouſneſs, and to equalize the advantages of all orders in the community. I have frequently been aſſured by farmers, that they never began to thrive till their rents were raiſed. While they had but trifling rents to pay, they could contrive to ſubſiſt, and to make up thoſe, without any conſiderable exertions of induſtry. But, when their rents were raiſed, activity was neceſſary, to ſave them from ruin. Thus forced to induſtry, they became habitually induſtrious; and, in conſequence, made themſelves rich, and improved all the comforts of their condition. Similar has been the effect of thoſe taxes, of the grievouſneſs of which we complain. They have rouſed us to exertions to which we owe our national opulence. They are laid out, too, among ourſelves, not ſquandered in diſtant wars, or in ſubſidies to foreign courts. The expences of the ſtate are paid chiefly to its own ſubjects. Our taxes return, with uſury,

into the hands of thoſe by whom they were originally ſupplied. The officers appointed to levy them have no powers to invade the liberty or ſecurity of the ſubject who pays them. Indeed, there never exiſted a ſtate in which the ſervants of the Executive Power were better reſtrained from the inſolent or diſhoneſt abuſe of the advantages of office.——Happily, too, ſuch is our national proſperity, that every branch of the revenue has been, of late, unuſually productive. There is no neceſſity for the impoſition of new taxes: Some which were burdenſome have been removed: And, if no ſudden diſtreſs ariſe, Adminiſtration will probably be enabled to make an annual reduction of our taxes, and at the ſame time to pay off, year after year, millions of the national debt. Such are the advantages which we gain, by reſting in happy tranquillity, while all Europe is in commotion!

Our King's preſent miniſters have remained ſo long in the office, that our Country could not be thus happy and flouriſhing, nor our Conſtitution ſo firmly eſtabliſhed, if they were weak or wicked. The ſucceſs of their meaſures is the beſt proof of their wiſdom. Their conduct has been vigilantly watched by an able oppoſi-

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tion. No moment has been neglected, at which they could be attacked with any proſpect of advantage. *But, it ſeems that they are vulnerable only through the vitals of our Conſtitution.*

I have heard, that ſome in Scotland imagine it a grievance, that one of their countrymen ſhould have diſtinguiſhed himſelf in Parliament, ſhould have riſen to be a member of the preſent Adminiſtration, ſhould have become Treaſurer to the Navy, and at length Secretary of State. But, conſider this matter in what light I will, I cannot ſee it as a national grievance. Men of abilities muſt become eminent in Parliament. He who has given this proof of his abilities may be reaſonably thought fit for a ſervant of the Executive Government. It is but juſt to call him who has honourably acquitted himſelf in one high office, to exert his abilities in the ſervice of his country, in one ſtill higher. Nor do I ſee, that it can be in any degree diſadvantageous to the inhabitants of North Britain, that an eminent member of the miniſtry happens to have particular reaſons for being well acquainted with the circumſtances of their country, and careful of its intereſts. In my mind, this is a circumſtance in which

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we ſhould rather rejoice. His late attention to the ſeamen, in ſettling eaſy means by which they or their agents, however ſcattered, may obtain payment of their wages, is one among other inſtances of his conduct from which we may infer, that he has the good of the Lower Orders of the community ſincerely at heart.

I have lately heard much idle and fooliſh talk about the Rights of Man. In the ſtate of nature, his rights are many, but his power feeble, and his enjoyments few. Would any of us exchange the dignity, the ſtrength, the comforts of ſocial life for the rights of nature? There are yet uninhabited iſlands, lonely mountains, and ſolitary foreſts, to which they may retire. Are we diſpoſed to cling to the bleſſings of ſociety? Then let us remember, that the Common Utility is the great principle on which Government is to be eſtabliſhed and maintained. Let each of us claim all thoſe rights which are not inconſiſtent with the rights of his fellow-citizens. Let us ſupport our civil conſtitution, while it makes all who are not egregiouſly wanting to themſelves, happy and reſpectable, and ſecures to us as many of the rights of nature as are compatible with the advantages of ſociety.

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Let us beware of change, unleſs the novelty propoſed be ſo much better than that which is to give place to it, as fully to compenſate for all the evils attending the change, and to leave us greater and happier than we were before,—when the current of affairs ſhall again ſubſide within a certain channel.

III. Would to God, that the condition of our neighbours, who have been urged to brave the evils of revolution, were ſuch as to invite us to follow their example! But, alas! by revolution has the progreſs of ſociety been miſerably retarded in *America*. Even now, new convulſions threaten the tranquillity of the United States. Hardly have they yet ariſen from that depth of diſtreſs, in which their merchants had no credit with foreigners, and could make no returns for thoſe articles of commerce which the neceſſities of their country required them to import. Politicians came from America to Europe, and told us, that the Americans were free, great, and happy; and that we, in Europe, would never be ſo, till we ſhould have reduced our governments to the ſame principles upon which they had regulated theirs. But, thoſe ſeducers proved to be like the Planters, and the Captains

tains of veſſels, who had, by lying repreſentations, laboured to entice away emigrants, whom they might ſell or pillage. The beſt refutation of the ſeditous doctrines propagated by Paine and his diſciples, has been publiſhed in the Boſton newſpapers, by Mr Adams, a man of well-known worth and eminence in the American Congreſs. It appears that the wiſeſt and moſt patriotic men in America think the conſtitution of their government ſtill imperfect, in ſo far as it differs from the civil conſtitution of Great Britain.

It is impoſſible to think of the fate of *France*, without pity and horror. Their national debt, the weight of their taxes, their ſufferings, the permanent inequalities eſtabliſhed among them were ſufficient to make the great body of the French nation reaſonably deſirous of a revolution. But, between reſentment, and exultation, their minds were infuriated, when they ſaw that the reign of tyranny was at an end. The votaries of revolution forgot that they compoſed only the majority, not the whole nation. They forgot the prejudices, the connexions, the intereſts of thoſe orders which had been favoured by the old eſtabliſhment.

Hence,

Hence, they urged on a change ſo violent, as to reduce all the privileged orders to diſtreſs and deſpair. Confuſion, diſſenſion, ſecret intrigue, and open oppoſition followed. For, who will ſee his honours humbled, his fortune raviſhed from him, his life threatened, his friends butchered, or driven into exile, without being rouſed to ſelf-defence? Convulſion has ſucceeded convulſion, till all the votaries of the old government, and *almoſt all thoſe who were active in the firſt eſtabliſhment of the new conſtitution* have been exterminated. An ill-conducted invaſion of the French territories has, indeed, been unſucceſsful; and French armies have chaſed the invaders into the heart of their own dominions. But, are the French the happier for this? The beginning of their revolution was attended with mobbings, maſſacres, robbery, flights, and baniſhments. In the firſt rage againſt the nobility, how many of theſe unfortunate men, with their families, were murdered amid every cruel circumſtance of ignominy and torture! Wherever tenants and dependents happened to have been in any degree ſatisfied with their Lords; they were plundered and murdered, with them.

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The merchants and manufacturers were not leſs obnoxious to the mob, than the proprietors of the lands. If a workman had been, at any time, in the ſlighteſt degree, diſſatisfied with his maſter; now was the time to revenge himſelf: The unhappy maſter was torn in pieces; his family ſhared his fate; his warehouſes were burnt or pillaged; and all the apparatus of his trade or manufacture deſtroyed. The fate of the virtuous labourer was, in the meantime, no leſs miſerable. The courſe of the national induſtry was ſtopped. The peaſant and the artiſan, unleſs they choſe to engage in the trade of riot, knew not where to earn their daily bread. They were obliged to hear their children cry for ſuſtenance which they had not to give; cries dreadful, horrible above all others to a parent's ear!—O my God! if the virtuous part of my countrymen ſhall ever ceaſe to enjoy the protection of the Britiſh conſtitution; cut them off by peſtilence, or by the ſword of a foreign enemy, rather than ſuffer them to fall into the hands of an infuriated mob!

But, the horrors of the preſent year have exceeded all that took place in the beginning of the revolution. Since the middle of ſummer, our

newſpapers have been filled with accounts of the moſt atrocious maſſacres and aſſaſſinations, perpetrated by the encouragement of a club who have taken it upon them to rule the ſtate. At the ſlighteſt word or action, giving offence to thoſe tyrants, their blood-hounds, the mob, were let looſe. The maſſacre of the Huguenots, by the inſtigation of Catherine of Medici, has been often related as a tale of horror: But, can it be compared with the horrors which Paris witneſſed on the 10th of Auguſt, and on the 2d and 3d of September? Although the reformers in France were Atheiſts, yet why drown the wretched prieſts? Was it patriotiſm that induced them to murder and drive into exile almoſt one-half of the nation, that thoſe who remained might ſhare their property? In this ſpirit have the national convention pronounced that definition of *Emigrants*, which has aſtoniſhed all who gave them credit for diſintereſted patriotiſm.——But, let us not ſuppoſe the French barbarous, inhuman, or unfortunate above all others. Similar commotions will plunge any other nation into the ſame depth of diſtreſs and guilt.

IV. And, now, ſince the Britiſh empire is in ſo flouriſhing a condition; ſince our civil conſtitution ſtill ſtands in all its primitive ſtrength and beauty; ſince our Sovereign and miniſters act in ſuch a manner as to deſerve the confidence of the nation; ſince we have ſo fair a proſpect of an increaſe of our population, our induſtry, our opulence, and of a diminution of our taxes; ſince natural, legal means remain, by which we may ſtrengthen and perfect our civil conſtitution, whenever any defects ſhall, in the progreſs of ſociety, be diſcovered in it: Who, then, are you, who raiſe the alarm of danger and the cry of reform; who aſſemble for political deliberation, without the appointment of your fellow-citizens, and without the ſanction of law; who name yourſelves the Friends of the People, and call upon the people to withdraw their confidence from their public ſervants and repreſentatives?

I have been at ſome pains to enquire who you are; and I am ſorry that the accounts which I have received of you are not more favourable.

One thing I have heard with pleaſure, that, notwithſtanding the noiſe which you make, your

your numbers are ſmall. It were miſerable, indeed, if the Britiſh empire could afford many individuals of your deſcription.

Your *Leaders* have been deſcribed as men of weak heads and bad hearts, who, through their giddineſs, ignorance, or ſtupidity, have found themſelves incapable of riſing in the army, at bar, in the church, or in the profeſſion of medicine; or who have, through the ſame means, been unſucceſsful in the tranſactions of trade and manufacture. Theſe men have ſelf-conceit enough to attribute to the circumſtances of the country what every perſon elſe aſcribes to *their* want of merit. It is natural enough for men, who want valour and military ſkill which might raiſe them in the army, to be willing to prompt the violence of the mob. He who has laboured in vain to acquaint himſelf with the laws of his country, may well deſire their abolition. The clergyman who has violated the decorum of the clerical character, and neglected the functions of his office, will naturally deſire to throw off all the reſtraints of religion. The bankrupt will perſuade himſelf, that, in the caſe of civil commotion, he may repair his broken fortunes. All theſe men have the ſame

intereſt

intereſt in exciting ſedition, and in throwing our ſtate into confuſion, which thieves and robbers have in ſetting an houſe on fire, that they may find an opportunity of theft and pillage.

They have, in the firſt inſtance, addreſſed themſelves to *drunkards*, who delight in every occaſion that can afford them a pretext for meeting to guzzle and drink;—to *ſchool-boys* and *apprentices*, who are weary of the authority which reſtrains them from idleneſs and debauchery;—to *journeymen*, and other young men, who, having become their own maſters, before attaining to years of diſcretion, are eager to ſhew, that it is ſo, by running headlong into every ſpecies of turbulence and licentiouſneſs. Theſe men have been aſſiduouſly told, that the great are to be ſtripped of their honours, the rich of their wealth; that an *equalization* is to be accompliſhed, by which the humble are to be exalted, and the lofty to be brought low; and that, in a change of affairs, ſuch numbers will be butchered or baniſhed, that the diviſion of their goods will afford rich fortunes to all who remain. They are ſecretly aſſured that they ſhall be freed from the neceſſity of labour,

and

and from the reſtraints of ſubordination: And this is ſpeaking directly to their paſſions.

To *ſober, well-meaning citizens*, poſſeſſing warmth of heart, without depth of head, a different language has been held. They have been told of grievances, of abuſes, of the neceſſity of *reform*, of the obſtinacy of kings and miniſters, of the power and the moderation of the people. With theſe ſpecious words have a few worthy men been decoyed into the ſociety of a ſet of deſperate *gamblers* (to uſe an apt ſimilitude) who will take an early occaſion to undeceive, by *pigeoning* them.——It is a remarkable fact that almoſt all the members of all your aſſociations are ſingle, unconnected perſons, without families, and ſocial attachments.

But, whatever the ſtate of our conſtitution or the ſituation of our public intereſts: ſurely, it were better to wait patiently till the French ſhall have ſettled their affairs, ſhall have lived ſix or eight years in tranquillity, and ſhall have approached towards that pitch of national wealth and happineſs which we now enjoy; rather than to make the ſame raſh experiment as they, before we can diſcern with what ſucceſs their experiment may be attended.

Vain

V. Vain, Gentlemen, are your efforts, vain your hopes, if ye fancy, that you may be able to throw your fellow-citizens into a ſtate of confuſion in which you may cheat or rob them of their honours and their property. Conſider, that you have againſt you, the Genius, the Virtue, the induſtry, the Property, the Religion of your country Every proprietor of land rejoices to ſupport that conſtitution by which his property is ſecured to him. The merchant while he ſmiles over his own *balance*, remarks how the commerce of France languiſhes. The manufacturer dreads the fate of the moſt ingenious and ſucceſsful French manufacturers, whoſe property has been pillaged and deſtroyed, and themſelves murdered by mobs more ferocious and ſanguinary than the tygers and wolves of the deſart. Even our peaſants and artiſans, who have not indeed wealth to loſe, have yet what is above all wealth; they have children, parents, brethren, wives; they delight to worſhip where their fathers worſhipped; they adore that God, and cleave to that Saviour in whom alone are all our conſolation, and all our joy. The very few virtuous citizens who have been, here and there, perſuaded

ed to concur in your views, have already mingled too much among you, not to diſcern the ſhallowneſs of your underſtandings, and the wickedneſs of your purpoſes. They are ready to ſeparate themſelves from you with horror.

We know all, that the French, our natural enemies, envy our preſent greatneſs and glory, and would gladly, in their ancient malice, throw us into civil confuſion, by means of ſuch inſtruments as you.——But we are aware of their arts. We are all of one heart, and one mind among ourſelves. We will cheriſh our civil conſtitution. We will not give up for Atheiſm, that holy and pure religion, in defence of which ſo much of the blood of our fathers was ſhed. We will firmly defend our families, our fortunes, our lives, and our laws. We will truſt with generous, yet diſcerning confidence in our parliamentary repreſentatives and in thoſe executive ſervants of the public whoſe abilities and integrity have been honourably proved. We will take no ſteps but ſuch as are authorized and directed by the laws of our conſtitution. We will reſtrain our children and ſervants from your ſchools of ſedition. You ſhall

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be left to the ſhame and the remorſe of fruitleſs wickedneſs. And, that good providence which has exalted us to glory and felicity, will ſtill protect us.

POSTSCRIPT.

POSTSCRIPT.

WHILE the above diſcourſe was in the preſs, things have aſſumed ſomewhat of a new aſpect. The nation have ſeen the neceſſity of maintaining the ſecurity of our lives and properties, by coming openly forward, to ſtrengthen the hands of Government. Public bodies eagerly reject the ſervices, and reſolve to check the ſedition of the pretended friends of the people. The people have become ſtill more ſuſpicious of thoſe officious friends: And, that nothing may be wanting to maintain the general tranquillity and the order of the ſtate, aſſociations are faſt forming through all Britain, to check ſedition, to ſuppreſs ſeditious writings, to diſcourage unneceſſary revolutions, and to maintain public order. Their declarations breathe at once the ſpirit of free-born Britons, the loyalty of good ſubjects, and the moderation of reaſonable, temperate, honeſt men.—The re-

ſolutions of the incorporated merchants in Leith, I have read with peculiar pleaſure. They are framed with a degree of enlightened good ſenſe, which induces me to recommend them warmly to the conſideration of every friend to order and liberty, and particularly as a model which may be uſefully conſulted by other aſſociated bodies meeting for a ſimilar purpoſe.

ASSEMBLY-ROOMS, LEITH,

Dec. 7th, 1792.

IN conſequence of the preſent POLITICAL AGITATION which is attempted to be raiſed in ſome parts of this country—The INCORPORATION of MERCHANTS in LEITH, friends to the Civil and Religious Conſtitution of Britain, met this day, to conſider the foundation and object of the preſent diſcontents.—After maturely conſidering the ſubject, they UNANIMOUSLY came to the following Reſolutions——

1*ſt*, That the Civil and Religious Conſtitution of Great Britain is the happieſt that the courſe of human affairs ever produced among men.

2*d*, That this Conſtitution, which has been the

the reſult of the wiſdom and experience of ages, and is the ſubject of admiration among ſurrounding nations, ſhould not be raſhly innovated.

3*d*, That by our preſent happy Conſtitution, the LIFE, LIBERTY, and PROPERTY of every individual is guarded by juſt and equal laws. —That no man, however great, is above their controul—and none ſo low, that they will not protect—therefore, that no perſon can be aggrieved, or perſonally feel injury, without the means of redreſs.

4*th*, That every man of VIRTUE, TALENTS, and INDUSTRY has it in his power to riſe in ſociety, under our preſent mild and happy government, in proportion as he exerts his abilities; and that there is none to make him afraid, or to oppreſs him with impunity.

5*th*, That, in human nature conſtituted as it is, no political Government can give univerſal ſatisfaction; for evil and deſigning men will always exiſt, and often, from ſelfiſh motives, raiſe complaints of ſuppoſed or aggravated grievances, which if thoſe men had the rule they would not amend.

6*th*, That if any body of Men feel grievances,

ces, they ought to apply in a conſtitutional manner to Parliament to have them redreſſed; and we are confident the wiſdom of the Legiſlative body will give the proper relief.

7th, That the people ought to be cautious not to be miſled by deſigning, diſappointed, or diſcontented men, whoſe purity of intention is ſuſpicious, and whoſe ſchemes may lead to very dangerous errors.

8th, That every meaſure conducive to the Honour, the Dignity, and Proſperity of the Britiſh nation, deſerves the approbation and the ſupport of every well-diſpoſed citizen; but that every member of the ſtate ſhould be jealous of innovation,—cautious of being miſled by party, or beguiled by theoretical and impracticable phantoms of Government, which might terminate in ruin to himſelf, and deſtruction to his country.

9th, That as good citizens, we will, to the utmoſt of our power, oppoſe whatever may have a tendency to diſturb the PEACE, HARMONY, and PROSPERITY which we now enjoy; bleſſings too valuable to be wantonly ſported with.

WM. SIBBALD, Maſter.

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THE pretended Friends of the People having alſo ſhifted their ground; I muſt beg leave to addreſs them further in the following queries.

I. HAVE you not talked of your reſpect for the Britiſh Conſtitution; yet, at the ſame time, exulted in the turbulence of the people, and in the inefficacy of the authority of magiſtrates? See *Edinburgh Gazetteer*, *No.* I. *Col.* 11*th.*

II. Have not mobs been more frequent ſince the inſtitution of your aſſociations, and that in the places where ſuch aſſociations meet?

III. Is it not *notorious*, that your moſt active leaders began their career of *patriotiſm* inſtantly upon being diſappointed of ſome *unreaſonable requeſts* from Government; changing their political ſentiments and conduct with a ſuddenneſs implying undeniably the utmoſt conceivable profligacy of principle? The hiſtory of a certain military newſmonger might eaſily be expoſed to the merriment of the public.

IV.

IV. Have you not, with all your pretended reſpect for the Conſtitution, declared, that you expect Reform neither from Miniſtry, nor from Oppoſition; conſequently, not from Parliament; and, of courſe, not in a way conſiſtent with the preſent laws of the Britiſh Conſtitution?

V. Is it decent for men who reſpect the limited monarchy of Great Britain, to approve the outrageous abuſe thrown out againſt kings by the National Convention of France?

VI. Have you not, by adopting, in your meetings, the forms and language of the preſent *Republican Tyrants* of France, plainly diſcovered a diſpoſition to imitate them, and deſtroy our conſtitution?

VII. Do you not meanly and baſely deceive your private correſpondents, and to public bodies in France,—or to the Britiſh Public, in your paragraphs and declarations in newſpapers; when you congratulate the former, and rejoice with them over all that has been done in France; yet aſſure the latter, that you reſpect the peace of our Country, our Laws, and our Conſtitution as it is compoſed of King, Lords, and Commons?

VIII.

VIII. *Do you not aſſert things to the Public, which you know to be falſe,—in the expectation, that ſuch falſehoods may accompliſh your miſchievous purpoſes, before they can be detected?*

IX. Have you not encouraged thoſe of the idle, unprincipled poor, who have become your adherents, to hope for a new diviſion of the lands, and even of the property of the merchants and manufacturers,—by which they may be enriched without induſtry?

X. Have you not ſtirred up the workmen to demand an augmentation of their wages; in conſequence of which there has been a riſe in the price of the neceſſaries and conveniencies of life, produced by their labour,—at which you have alſo perſuaded them to murmur; and, in like manner, a neceſſary riſe in the price of all our exports, which threatens the ruin of our trade and manufactures?

XI. Is it not evident from reports made to the National Convention of France, within theſe laſt ſix weeks, that the Convention's authority is deſpiſed, except where ſupported by military force? In the departments of Eure and Loire, for inſtance, has there not been a recent inſurrection; the inſurgents demanding an Agrarian

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an law, the preſervation of the Catholic religion, with the diminution of the enormous taxes levied upon them, and threatening to march to Paris if their demands be refuſed?

XII. Does it not appear from documents which have been laid before the Convention of France, that more egregiouſly knaviſh abuſes of the advantages of public office have been committed by the ſervants of the French Government, ſince the abolition of monarchy in France, than ever before diſgraced, at one time, ſo many of the miniſters of any legally conſtituted government? That a commiſſary Stevenot, for example, of the Section de la Buttre des Moulins, committed the moſt atrocious acts of plunder, robbery, and extortion, under the ſanction, and with the arms of the National authority?

XIII. Have not extraordinary inſtitutions for public accuſation, arbitrary trials, and condemnations in which law and equity are contemptuouſly violated,—rendered property and perſonal liberty more inſecure, at preſent in France, than they ever were, under any other form of deſpotiſm?

XIV. Has not the commerce in the neceſſa-

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ries of life been ſuſpended, and the traders ruined, through the turbulence and diſtreſs of the people, the inefficiency of the laws, and the weakneſs of the government?

XV. Was not a mother, in France, lately reduced by hunger, to murder, and devour her own child?—Think of this, ye parents, ye mothers!

XVI. Did not the French formerly profeſs an abhorrence of conqueſt, and a reſolution never to carry their arms beyond the limits of their own territories?

XVII. Has not Savoy been united with France, while that country was under the awe of a French army?

XVIII. Have not the Netherlands been cruelly plundered by people calling themſelves Commiſſaries from the National Convention?

XIX. Are not the French, at this moment, reduced to this dilemma, that they muſt either recall their generals and diſband their armies, or impower thoſe generals to ravage the ſcenes of their conqueſts, and to raiſe contributions upon them, as upon conquered and enſlaved ſtates?

XX. Is not the government of France, at this moment, properly ſpeaking, a military one?

XXI. Are not thoſe the enemies of our country, who urge us to a tenor of public conduct, which would infallibly throw the Britiſh empire into the ſame ſtate in which France is at preſent?

XXII. Are not thoſe the enemies of our conntry who ſtrive, whether by direct or indirect means, to reduce it into the condition of *a province of France*—or, let it be granted,—of *a few united departments of the French Republic*; And who deſire to divide between themſelves and French generals and commiſſaries, our corn, our wool, our cattle, the produce of our manufactures, and the riches of our merchants?

Now, Gentlemen, be for once calm and reaſonable. Anſwer theſe queries ſatisfactorily; not with clamour, or with angry, unſupported aſſertion; but, with clear explanation, and unqueſtionable evidence.——Anſwer them thus; or diſſolve your aſſociations, hide your heads, and be ſilent.

FINIS.

BRITISH MUSEUM